

Congressman King reacts to strong showing of Congressional disapproval for settlement program funding unresolved Pigford v. Vilsack claims

Washington D.C.- Congressman Steve King (R-IA) released the following statement after 155 Members of Congress voted in favor of an amendment he offered to the Agriculture Appropriations bill in an attempt to block an additional \$1.15 billion in spending allocated for the fraud-plagued Pigford II settlement program.

"The vote on my amendment revealed that 155 Members of Congress are prepared to join me in pulling the plug on funding for unresolved Pigford v. Vilsack claims because of the concerns that have been raised about widespread fraud," said King. "These concerns are well placed."

"How is it possible that Secretary Vilsack can identify 94,000 'victims' of USDA discrimination against black farmers from a total universe of only 18,000 black farmers? The original USDA estimate predicted that 3,000 of 18,000 black farmers would file a discrimination claim. Now, Tom Vilsack and Eric Holder have taken it upon themselves to negotiate a \$1.15 billion agreement in Pigford II with the anonymous representatives of a universe of anonymous claimants that has swelled to 94,000. When added to the tab of the Pigford I settlement, this new \$1.15 billion agreement brings the total taxpayer funded Pigford payout to \$2.3 billion."

"We do not have the list of all the attorneys who are collecting commissions as part of these settlements, but we do have video footage of one of them admitting that 10% of his clients are frauds. Despite this, Secretary Vilsack asserts there are only three cases of fraud in the 94,000 -- yet the USDA has not identified, let alone disciplined, a single employee who discriminated against even one of these 94,000."

"We've all heard the expression 'victimless crime', but now we have 'crimeless victims' -- individuals who, without basis for a grievance, claim to be victims even though no one can be identified as having discriminated against them. In light of the strong showing of support for my effort to block funding for Pigford II, the House should now be prepared to initiate a Congressional investigation. The 155 votes my amendment received indicate that the stage has been set for this Congress to investigate Pigford II fraud fully."

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